5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Bedouin MJ4

forth scornfully triumphant over the worst that environment can do to him. There is no division of labor in the desert. Every man has the same occupation and is pursued by the same gaunt specter of starvation. Every man breathes the same atmosphere of the great free desert and shares the same conceptions of God and His terrible omnipotence. How could men be otherwise than equal when they all live in the same desert and worship the same God? The hypocrisies and pretenses of caste and rank cannot live long in that country where God is so great and so terrible and so omnipotent and where men at the best are helpless insects in His hands.

The Arab is perhaps the most incorrigible individualist that the world affords. He regards any abridgement of his liberty as intolerable. His desert is a land of freedom. Everybody does what is right in his own eyes with perhaps less restraint than anywhere else in the world. To one who is familiar with the Orient, perhaps the most significant fact to be noted in Arab society is the complete absence of the caste system. The Arab knows nothing about caste. His sheikh, who has the power of life and death over him, the Bedouin regards as on precisely his own level. He expects this sheikh to rule well, to have a heavy hand for offenders, to maintain relations with neighboring tribes, to protect the poor from the rapacity of the rich. If the sheikh does not do all these things, he will join cheerfully with his comrades in assassinating him and will submit with equal cheerfulness to whomsoever may be his successor. He would be not at all nonplussed if asked to be ruler himself; quite possibly he might fill the office with credit. All this he knows, as does his sheikh. The result is a society where there is almost no feeling of superiority and inferiority,

13: Thesiger T-3 (ca. 1949) 1950 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
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further than this, for none of them wishes to get a reputation for being a quarrelsome or trying companion, and so, when there is anything to do, they all jump up and offer to do it, whether it is to look for a camel, gather wood, or make coffee. Their life is ruled by conventions, and public opinion sees to it that these conventions are observed. In the desert there is no privacy. Every action is seen, and you might say every word is overheard, for they always live crowded together for safety; in any case, they are the most observant people in the world, and everything that happens, however trivial, is noted and later repeated and discussed, so that something which a man has said or done on the coast of the Persian Gulf will be spoken of months later, hundreds of miles away on the borders of the Yaman.

Another difference between Badu and villagers is the way they treat their animals. No Badui would ever knock his camel about; it is far too precious, and in any case he is much too deeply attached to it. You will often see him fondling and kissing his camel, and he will generally be hunting round for titbits for it. Badui, indeed, will always sacrifice their own comfort to that of their animals. Some years ago, when we arrived in the Hadhramaut out of the desert, I remember the enormous meals which were provided for us, such as my always hungry companions cannot even have dreamed of; yet next day they were frantic to get back to the desert where there would be proper grazing for their animals. Sometimes, looking at a wonderful view, I have said to a Badui, "Isn't that lovely?" and he has looked round for a bit and answered, "No, it is rotten bad grazing," and he saw nothing else, whereas if he had been a Persian he would have rhapsodized over it.

Yet they are passionately fond of poetry. They are a noisy, talkative race. I think many of them would find it as hard to stop talking as a heavy smoker to stop smoking, but they will sit for hours in silence if someone is reciting poetry. They are also deeply religious, and in their hard lives they derive at all times a profound comfort from their faith. Townsmen often scoff at them and say that they are little better than pagans because they do not observe all the ritual of Islam and are sometimes lax over their prayers and fasting, but you cannot be with them without realizing what an integral part of their everyday lives their religion is. A Rashdi once described to me how alone he had crossed the trackless wastes of the Eastern sands for 450 waterless miles. Astounded that anyone should have ventured on such a journey unaccompanied, I asked him, "Do you really mean that you were by yourself?" and he answered me quite simply, "God was my companion."

The Badu are the product of their environment, and it is the constant struggle for survival which has fashioned them as they are. Security is unknown to them and their rewards are at all times pitifully small. At any moment drought, disease, or raiders may sweep their herds away. Yet, tempered from childhood by wind and sun, they face life unflinchingly. In this harsh and barren land the desert lad mates only with the desert maid, for who else would share the Badu's couch among the wind-blown sand? For centuries they have guarded the purity of their blood with the dagger, and they are fine-drawn, highly strung, and unstable as thoroughbreds.

ordinary Beduin. While the Beduin is very jealous of his dignity in public, the Sherari is often prepared to make himself ridiculous for the amusement of his betters or in hopes of a reward. He is sometimes quite amusing, and is famous for his rather vulgar and undignified but irrepressible and often pointed witticisms (rather like the London cockney).

Like the Sulubba, the Sherarat, who are more intimate with the desert than the real Beduins, are excellent guides. They too prefer to spend the summer far away in the desert, beside some distant water-hole known only to themselves. It is not uncommon to meet a Sherari and his wife with a flock of camels deep in the desert, with no tent and no gear, living on the milk of the camels and sleeping in the open. The Beduins require more luxury, and after living thus for a short time, begin to want food, coffee, and a tent.

While the Sherarat thus bear a good deal of resemblance to the Sulubba socially, unlike the latter they carry arms and defend themselves from attack. Until recently, however, they paid tribute to the Beduins in whose areas they encamped. Sherarat, living as servants with Beduins, will accompany their masters on raiding parties, something to which the Sulubba were prohibited.

During the past decade in the Jauf area, Ibn Saud has aimed at raising the status of the Sherarat, doubtless with a view to increasing his fighting men.

The Sherarat, who own great numbers of camels, used to be famous for the quality of their swift riding camels. Although some individuals are comparatively wealthy, they spend very little, live only in tiny tents, wear ragged clothes, and beg, cadge, or hire themselves out as laborers or carriers.

30: Gt. Britain G-5 (ca. 1918) 1920 MJ1 Saudi Arabia
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156 609 conditions, singly or in combination, cause the attitude of individuals or groups to differ in degree. As a general rule nomads who range habitually on the fringes of alien civilized areas are more dangerous to encounter than those habitually withdrawn in the wilds. Thus, the northern and western constituents of the great Anazah group are less safe to visit than the Shammar. Other contingent circumstances may make particular groups yet more hostile—if, for example, they range near the political frontier of two alien powers, as do the eastern Sinaitic groups; or in a difficult mountainous country, like the Huweitāt and Huteim east and north of Akaba; or where shelter and water can be obtained in hidden rocky recesses, as among the Beni Sakhr in the southern trans-Jordan region; or in insalubrious low-lying tracts such as the Yemen Tihāmah, or the southern part of Hasa, or the eastern part of the south coast, which account for the evil repute of the Zaranik (*Dharāniq*), the Ahl Murrah, and the Qara tribes respectively.

Certain of the inland tribes, however, have reputations as bad or worse, and in their case one must look for peculiar causes. The ill fame of some groups of the Harb, for example—of one group especially, the 'Auf sub-tribe of the Masrūh section—is probably due to temptation long put in their way by the pilgrim routes, where these pass through a lean region debated between two powers. The repute, again, of the Qahtān, reckoned by the popular voice the most savage of Bedouin groups, may be accounted for by their seclusion and isolation along the northern fringe of the impenetrable Southern Desert. It is possible, however, that in both these instances report is worse than fact—in the one, because it is the well-known pilgrim route that has so often suffered, in the other because the northern Bedouins, who chiefly inform European minds, [266] know very little about the group in question. It is common talk, for example, that some of the Qahtān tribes are cannibal. On investigation, this imputation is always passed southward to the next group, till it finally fades away into *terra incognita*.

One word of caution, however, must be uttered about such cut-and-dried tribal reputations. They have not, in some cases, been always the same. The Huteim, for instance, who have a bad name for robbery now, used to be esteemed among the most inoffensive of nomads—almost on a par with the despised but universally tolerated Sulubba. Some one familiar with the desert talk of the moment should always be consulted before the desert itself is entered.

609 577 621 The least suspicious and most trustworthy Bedouins are, naturally, those of the largest and best-knit tribes, especially such as form part of a federation under the central authority of one of the